

Abdominoplasty discharge information sheet

This leaflet explains more about going home after having an abdominoplasty, including what you can expect when you come to hospital. Please remember there are variations depending on your individual circumstances.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is an abdominoplasty?

An abdominoplasty is an operation to reduce the size of your abdomen. It is a procedure that removes excess skin/tissue from the abdomen and tightens the abdominal wall muscles. This is not an essential operation and the decision to have it depends on how you feel about the appearance of your abdomen.

What do I need to do when going home?

Someone must drive you home.

Ensure you have any tablets or medicines plus advice on how and when to take them.

Ensure you have been given your discharge summary and information regarding your consultant follow-up appointment.

Ensure you have telephone contact numbers at the hospital.

Make sure that you are wearing a well-fitting pair of Lycra shorts or an abdominal support or make arrangements for someone to buy this for you as soon as possible. This helps to control any swelling and prevent fluid collection under the skin.

You will be given an appointment to see the Plastics Dressing Clinic nurses in approximately 7-10 days. If you have not received details about this appointment within a few days of discharge, please contact the appointments line below to book this

What can I do to help my recovery?

Remember you need rest for at least two weeks following this operation. Do not expect to be able to manage on your own as normal. You may need to arrange a relative or friend to help around the house.

Do not carry out any heavy lifting for six weeks. This means children, vacuum cleaners, pots, pans, kettles, laundry and shopping bags.

Avoid any sports/exercise for at least six weeks. This includes sexual intercourse.

Do not drive for 4-6 weeks or until the wounds have healed and you have no pain.

Do not return to work for at least four weeks. This will vary according to the type of job you do and your recovery.

Keep moving around and take gentle exercise.

What should I look out for once discharged home?

You will only be discharged when the medical and nursing staff decide it is safe. However, things to watch out for when you are home include:

Bleeding – if you experience bleeding after going home, contact the ward. If this cannot be stopped with firm pressure over the wound for 15 minutes, you should go to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department.

Wound breakdown – small areas along the line of stitches may open up and produce fluid. This is not uncommon. If this occurs apply a simple dressing from a chemist or one you have been provided with on discharge from hospital. Then arrange to see your GP or make an appointment in the Plastic Dressing Clinic, whichever is more convenient in terms of time and distance. If you choose to go to your GP also arrange an appointment in the Plastic Dressing Clinic so that any problems can be monitored.

Infection - signs include redness, swelling, increased pain, heat and/or discharge from the wound. This can be treated with antibiotics, please contact your GP or the Plastic Dressing Clinic (PDC) immediately if you notice any of these signs. Out of hours you should attend Accident and Emergency or an Urgent Care Centre. **Do not delay** getting medical attention, as an infection can become life threatening if left untreated.

Seroma formation. This is when fluid collects around the scar line underneath the skin. Sometimes this needs to be drained using a syringe and needle. Alternatively it can be left to drain away naturally if not causing discomfort. Wearing a good supportive garment may help to reduce and/or control this.

What normal changes may I expect after an abdominoplasty?

Altered sensation. You can expect some loss of feeling in the skin around the area operated on. This numbness usually reduces in the following weeks. Occasionally this may last longer and can be permanent.

Scars. These can become red and lumpy. Any scar takes a minimum of 12 months to settle. There is a possibility that it will remain raised and noticeable. Once all areas have healed and the dressings are removed, you are advised to wash and dry the area normally. You should also moisturise and massage the scar twice a day with a non-perfumed cream (such as E45 lotion, 50/50 ointment- 50% liquid paraffin and 50% soft paraffin, Diprobase, Vaseline Intensive Care).

Extra skin lumps. As the swelling reduces and the scars settle you may notice small pyramids of additional soft tissue at the scar edges. These can be reduced with surgery at a later date under a local anaesthetic if required. The surgeon will talk to you about this at the follow up outpatient appointment.

Need for further surgery. Any concerns regarding scars and skin lumps can be discussed with your surgeon at your follow up appointment.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will usually require a follow up appointment approximately one week after discharge with one of the nurses in PDC to check your wound progress and a follow up with your consultant 6-8 weeks later. These appointments will either be made before you leave the hospital, or given to you by post or by 'phone. If you have not received notification of your appointments within 3-4 days of your discharge please contact the plastic surgery appointments on 020 8725 5855 who can book this for you. Please note that you may require further follow ups in PDC but these will be arranged at your first PDC review.

Useful sources of information

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/cosmetic-treatments-guide/Pages/tummy-tuck.aspx>

<http://www.bapras.org.uk/public/patient-information/surgery-guides/abdominoplasty>

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your abdominoplasty, please contact the plastic surgery dressing clinic nurses on 020 8725 0473 or the lead clinical nurse in plastic surgery on 020 8672 1071 and ask the operator to bleep number 6332 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). Out of hours, please contact Keate ward on 020 8725 3226 /3227.

For plastic surgery appointments, contact 020 8725 5855.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111



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